

THE MINUTES OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

David Hollenberg, Chairman

25 May 1989

Present: David Hollenberg, Chairman
Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A.
John Dickey, F.A.I.A.
Penelope H. Batcheler, Historical Architect for Independence
National Historical Park

Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Assistant Historic Preservation
Officer
Maria Petrillo, Chief Assistant City Solicitor, Law
Department

Also: Andrew Blanda of Otto Sperr Architects and Lance T. Funston,
Owner, to present plans for alterations to 301 South 21st
Street
Duane Perry, Owner, to present plans for alterations to
220-22 Spruce Street
Terri Vargosko and Chuck Grobe of Capital Sign Advertising
and Ronald Lo of the First Commercial Bank of
Philadelphia to present a sign proposal for 1027 Arch
Street
Herbert Bass, Esq., Charles Broudy, Architect and Jeffrey
Glass of Boyd's Men's Store to present a proposal for
the addition of awnings and an entrance canopy on the
front facade of 1818-20 Chestnut Street
Sam Olshin, Architect, Tony Atkin & Associates and Phil
Bongiorno regarding alterations to 1916 Rittenhouse
Square
Leslie Deis, Dekoda Architects, to present revised plans
for a rear addition at 135 Carpenter Street
John Taxin, Owner, to request permission to demolish the
building at 136 South Front Street
Jane Quigley of the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority and
Tom Kelly of the Board of Revision of Taxes regarding the
proposed demolition of 136 South Front Street.
Donald Phimister, Architect, and A. C. Peruto, Jr., Esq., to
present plans for alterations to 2056 Pine Street.
Joseph Zelaskey, Owner, requesting an approval of illegal
work undertaken at 241 Catharine.

City Hall Tower Observation Deck. Before convening its regularly scheduled meeting, two members of the Architectural Committee and two members of the Commission staff toured the observation area atop City Hall Tower with staff members of the Department of Public Property's Division of Architecture and Engineering, the architects for the project and several engineers engaged in the restoration of the tower.

The Committee agreed that the proposed new observation deck should have the least amount of visual and actual impact possible while still satisfying visibility, safety and ventilation requirements. The Committee urged the project architects to consider finding solutions to design problems through operational rather than architectural means if at all feasible. Owing to the imminently pending removal of the existing scaffolding, the Committee urged the architects to submit their proposal as soon as possible and agreed to arrange for a special meeting of the Committee should that be necessary to expedite this project.

RECOMMENDATION: No action required.

SUBMISSIONS FOR ALTERATIONS

301 South 21st Street, Andrew Blanda of Otto Sperr Architects and Lance T. Funston, Owner. Approximately a year ago, the Historical Commission approved the demolition of a 1927 auditorium at the rear of 301 South 21st Street. Since that time, the architect, Andrew Blanda, has developed a plan for the proposed treatment of the demolition site. This plan includes the construction of a kitchen and conservatory; the addition of a garden, terrace and pool; some alteration to an existing brick wall; and the addition of a garage entrance on the Cypress Street elevation.

The Committee examined Mr. Blanda's plans and agreed to recommend an approval, in concept, of the architect's proposed treatment of this property subject to some minor revision.

In particular, the Committee focused upon the proposed treatment of the garden wall along 21st Street. The Committee suggested that the architect simplify the treatment of the 21st Street wall using a simple brick or stone coping rather than a series of capitals atop the existing pilasters. In all other respects, the Committee found the proposed work to be acceptable. Of course, a complete set of working drawings, details and specifications must be submitted for review before a final approval can be granted.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval in concept subject to simplification of garden wall.

220-222 Spruce Street, Duane Perry, Applicant. On 30 March 1989, the Committee reviewed and approved, in concept, the proposed enlargement of the rear dormer at 220 Spruce Street subject to a reduction in its width.

Mr. Perry appeared before the Committee to present his revised plans for the construction of the proposed dormer. As recommended by the Committee, the applicant reduced the width of the dormer to contain three rather than four windows. In addition, Mr. Perry presented to the Committee his proposal to install a new window in the first floor rear wall of 222 Spruce Street; to demolish an existing modern addition at the rear of the property; to erect a garden trellis in the rear yard, and to enlarge an existing opening to accommodate new wood gates in the garden wall.

The Committee found all of the proposed work to be acceptable and agreed to recommend a final approval of this application to the Commission.

RECOMMENDATION: Final Approval.

1027 Arch Street, Terri Vargosko and Chuck Grube of Capital Sign Company and Ronald Lo of the First Commercial Bank of Philadelphia. The applicants presented to the Committee their proposal for the placement of a single face, internally illuminated, cabinet sign on the facade of 1027 Arch Street. As proposed, the sign would attach to the exterior face of two stone pilasters and span the westernmost bay on Arch Street.

The Committee found the size, scale, materials and proposed mounting of the sign on the building to be unacceptable. In addition, the applicant, a first floor tenant, was advised to contact the owner with regard to this matter since the building is being rehabilitated as a Tax Act project. It was the opinion of the Committee that the design and placement of the proposed sign on the building would jeopardize the owner's certification of the project for receipt of the rehabilitation tax credit.

Following some discussion, the Committee recommended that the sign be placed behind the glass and that its size be reduced considerably. As an alternative, the Committee suggested painting the signage directly on the glass window. This alternative treatment would be more in keeping with the historic character of the building.

The applicant was advised that even if the Historical Commission approves a sign for this building, the owner will still need to submit to the National Park Service to obtain the approval of that office for Tax Act certification.

Subsequent to the Committee meeting, the staff received a revised submission for a smaller sign to be hung from the ceiling and behind the glass storefront. This resubmission conforms to the Committee recommendation and a final approval is now recommended.

RECOMMENDATION: Final Approval.

1818-1820 Chestnut Street, Herbert Bass, Esq., Charles Broudy, Architect and Jeffrey Glass of Boyd's Men's Store. At its April meeting, the Architectural Committee reviewed the proposed rehabilitation of the building at 1818-20 Chestnut Street for use as Boyd's Men's Store. At that time, the Committee recommended an approval of the proposed treatment of both the interior of the building and of the Sansom Street facade. The Committee recommended several changes on the Chestnut Street elevation. The Committee asked that the finish on the Chestnut Street window display cases have a statuary bronze rather than a bright brass finish. The Committee also recommended the elimination of all window awnings and the proposed entrance canopy. In place of an entrance canopy, the Committee suggested the installation of either two single or one double awning to mark the entrance to the building. In addition, the Committee supported the proposed placement of banners on the facade to be hung from the two existing flagpoles on the upper floors. The members also suggested the use of a color or colors more compatible with the color and tone of the facade materials.

On 10 May 1989, the applicant appeared before the Historical Commission to appeal the Committee's recommendation. The Commission agreed to support the Committee in its recommendation for a statuary bronze finish on the Chestnut Street window display cases. The Commission, however, further voted to approve, in concept, the placement of window awnings, an entrance canopy and banners on the Chestnut Street facade. This approval, in concept, was subject to the applicant's returning to the Architectural Committee to work out the final design details for the window awnings and entrance canopy and the method of their attachment to the front facade. The Commission also asked for a reconsideration of the proposed color.

As directed by the Commission, the Committee members again examined the proposed treatment of the Chestnut Street facade. It was noted that the banners have been withdrawn by the applicant from the overall scheme. The Committee first addressed the design of the entrance canopy. The Chairman and other members objected to the use of an arch shaped canopy within the square entrance openings. The Chairman also expressed his concern regarding the placement of awnings over the storefront windows at the first floor. The sheer size of glass within each of the bays on the first floor is unparalleled in the city and adds to the elegance of the first floor storefront. The use of awnings in these bays will diminish the impact of the storefront and the entrance canopy.

Next, the Committee examined and approved the detail drawings for the awnings on the upper floors. The Committee asked for a redesign of the entrance canopy in a square rather than an arched form. Finally, the Committee expressed serious concern with regard to possible damage to historic fabric at the ground floor and asked for a detail showing attachment of the awnings and entrance canopy in this area.

The applicant agreed to provide the additional detail requested by the Committee and to reconsider the design of the entrance canopy. Finally, it was agreed that the blue color chosen by the applicant for the canvas material was acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION: No action required.

1916 Rittenhouse Square, Sam Olshin of Tony Atkin & Associates. Mr. Olshin presented to the Committee two proposals for alterations to the facade of 1916 Rittenhouse Street to comply with handicap access requirements. Scheme "A" proposed the enlargement of an existing window grate to a handicap minimum 32" wide doorway with a wrought iron door similar in configuration to the existing grate. Scheme "B" proposed the enlargement as well of the existing window opening opposite and symmetrical to the doorway to preserve a balance to the facade. The proposed new window and panel below would be detailed similar to existing conditions.

The Committee evaluated both proposals and agreed to recommend an approval of Scheme A.

The Committee also reviewed and approved a major facade rehabilitation on Manning Street. This proposed alteration will improve the streetscape in this area which currently is the site of a one-story garage. The Committee did suggest, however, the use of shutters at the ground floor openings.

RECOMMENDATION: Final approval of Scheme A.

135 Carpenter Street, Leslie Deis, Dekoda Architects. On 27 April 1989, the Architectural Committee reviewed and approved plans for a rear addition to 135 Carpenter Street. Subsequent to that meeting, the owner asked the architect to make some revisions to the design of this addition and to resubmit to the Committee for another review. The revised design called for a much larger addition which would increase the size of the roof deck substantially and also allow an open air room for housing an HVAC condensor unit.

The Committee members examined the resubmission and agreed that the scale of the proposed rear addition, as revised, now overwhelms the original building. The Committee asked that the size of the addition and the roof deck be reduced. The Committee agreed that some

expansion of the addition and deck could occur but that it must be a reasonable increase. The architect was asked to restudy the problem, revise her plans and resubmit the application.

RECOMMENDATION: Denial.

136 South Front Street (demolition application), John Taxin, Applicant. Mr. Taxin, President of Old Original Bookbinders, appeared before the Architectural Committee to present his request for permission to demolish the buildings located at 136 South Front Street. This property contains a nineteenth century warehouse with several eighteenth century tenements at the rear of the property.

Mr. Taxin explained to the Committee his need for additional parking in order to continue the successful operation of his restaurant, Old Original Bookbinders, located at 125 Walnut Street. Mr. Taxin proposes to use the site for surface parking. Mr. Taxin advised the Committee that offers for purchase of the property have been made. However, owing to his need for parking, Mr. Taxin explained that he has no intention of selling the property at this time. He further reported to the Committee that the development rights for his Sanson Street property have been sold. As a part of this development, he intends to construct an underground garage.

Mrs. Batcheler asked Mr. Taxin if he had looked elsewhere for parking and if he had contacted Hobart Cawood concerning the availability of parking in the Area F garage. Mrs. Batcheler advised Mr. Taxin that parking may indeed be available in this garage on the first floor which had been earmarked for buses. Mr. Taxin reported that he had talked with various persons regarding parking in the Area F garage and that none was available.

Following some discussion, the Committee voted to recommend to the Historical Commission that action on this application be tabled and that the applicant be directed to submit the information required under Section (7)(f) of the historic preservation ordinance. This section applies in any instance where there is a claim that a building, structure, site or object cannot be used for any purpose for which it is or may be reasonably adapted, or where a permit application for alteration, or demolition is based, in whole or in part, on financial hardship.

RECOMMENDATION: Table action.

2056 Pine Street, Donald Phimister, Architect and A.C. Peruto, Jr., Esq., Owner. This application came to the Committee as a result of a violation and stop work order issued by the Department of Licenses and Inspections. Work on this property was begun without a building permit and without the review and approval of this office. Alterations already performed included the destruction of a portion of the ground floor, twentieth century storefront and the enlargement of second and third floor window openings on the gable wall.

Subsequent to the receipt of the violation, the applicant secured the services of an architect to prepare drawings to show the completed illegal alterations and the proposed remainder of the work. The Committee reviewed the drawings submitted by the architect and requested several revisions. The changes requested by the Committee include the restoration of the enlarged window openings on the gable end of the building to their original size and the removal of a proposed addition at the rear of building housing a stair leading to the third floor. The architect agreed to revise the drawings and resubmit prior to the Commission meeting.

Subsequent to the meeting, the architect revised his drawings in agreement with the Committee recommendations. A final approval is now recommended.

RECOMMENDATION: Final approval.

- 241 Catharine Street, Joseph Zalesky, Owner. Mr. Zalesky appeared before the Committee to request an approval of illegal work undertaken at 241 Catharine Street without benefit of a building permit or the Historical Commission's review and approval. The work involved the replacement of the historic front with a new facade incompatible with the historic character of the streetscape and the neighborhood.

Mr. Zalesky explained to the Committee his contractor's assurance that he would get a building permit for the removal of the historic front and its replacement with a new brick facade. In fact, the contractor did not secure the permit and the Department of Licenses and Inspections issued a violation for the illegal work.

It was the opinion of the Committee that the owner acted in good faith and that he relied upon his contractor's assurance that "everything would be taken care of." For this reason, the Committee agreed that no sanctions should be imposed upon Mr. Zalesky. The members voted to recommend that the property be removed from the list of designated buildings owing to a substantial loss of historic and architectural integrity.

RECOMMENDATION: Removal from the Philadelphia Historical Commission Register of Historic Properties.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Siemiontkowski
Assistant Historic Preservation Officer