

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
COMMITTEE ON CERTIFICATION
MINUTES

8 March 1984

The eighteenth meeting of the Committee on Certification occurred at 2:30 P. M. on Thursday, 8 March 1984, in Room 1313, City Hall Annex.

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, Philadelphia City Planning Commission
James E. Mooney
Hyman Myers
William D. Thompson, Member, Philadelphia Historical Commission

Richard Tyler, Historian
Jefferson M. Moak, Executive Secretary

Also Present: John Hannum, Roxborough-Manayunk-Wissahickon Historical Society

700 Wise's Mill Road
ca. 1845-1850

The frame farmhouse at 700 Wise's Mill Road stands 2½ stories high. Erected around 1850 for Thomas Singleton, it exists today as a survivor of the days when upper Roxborough was primarily a rural community. Many of its contemporaries have either disappeared or been incorporated into later housing developments as the farmland was sold off, thus destroying their original integrity.

The Historian recited the history and circumstances surrounding this piece of ground, explaining that the Fairmount Park Commission intends to acquire it under the terms of an ordinance recently passed by City Council but wished that no incumbrance be attached to the land before it passed into their possession. The Committee invited Mr. John Hannum, of the Roxborough-Manayunk-Wissahickon Historical Society, to express his views and those of the Society upon the matter. Mr. Hannum pleaded for the certification of the house as one of the few representatives of Roxborough's rural heritage still remaining in its original surroundings. He also mentioned that the present tenant, who prepared the nomination, had been given until 15 March 1984 to vacate the premises. The Roxborough-Manayunk-Wissahickon Historical Society wished to see the Fairmount Park Commission acquire the property with the building intact and to preserve the building within the Park historic house system.

Mr. Baldinger replied that certification of the building would not aid the present tenants in their fight against the eviction and indeed, the earliest the Commission would act upon the nomination would be in April, three weeks after the eviction had taken effect. In addition, if the Fairmount Park Commission wished to preserve the house, it would assign its own tenant to the property rather than assuming the burden of an existing lease. He suggested, and the rest of the Committee agreed, that the Committee act upon the nomination as submitted without considering the matter of the Fairmount Park acquisition and the needs of the present tenant.

Mr. Myers then voiced fault with the form stating that based upon the information it contained the building appeared to possess no significance to warrant certification. In addition, he inquired whether all of the buildings presently situated on this parcel of land were included in the nomination. The members of the Committee, upon motion, voted unanimously to table the nomination and referred it back to the nominator, and the Roxborough-Manayunk-Wissahickon Historical Society, if necessary, for revisions. The Chairman thanked Mr. Hannum for his appearance, after which Mr. Hannum withdrew.

5000 Block Griscom Street and 5000 Block Penn Street (Frankford)

Pursuant to a request by the Committee at its last meeting, two staff members undertook a photographic and walking survey of these two blocks in Frankford, along with several adjoining blocks. This request was prompted by a nomination for 5028 and 5030 Griscom Street which the Committee reviewed on 8 December 1983. Mr. Moak reported that since the beginning of the year, he had received an additional nomination, this for 5035 Penn Street, and two inquiries regarding the certification process, one from the owner of 5019 Penn Street and the other from the owner of 5038 Griscom Street.

These two blocks contain a number of examples of late 19th century and early 20th century architecture, some of them excellent specimens. This type of architecture has not received much recognition as part of Frankford's history. The staff passed photographs of the neighborhood to the members of the Committee showing the divergent nature of this area. Mr. Moak recommended that, based upon the interest shown by the residents of the area, he contact them and suggest that they nominate most of the buildings on both blocks at one time rather than submitting nominations over a long period of time. The Committee agreed with this recommendation. Mr. Myers requested that when the nominations were filed, a map be provided to the members indicating the relationship of the nominated properties to one another.

The Committee accepted the staff report on the 5000 blocks of Griscom and Penn Streets. Since the nominations for 5028 and 5030 Griscom Street were not formally presented at the meeting, no action was taken upon them.

5321 Knox Street: The George Jones House
Between 1868 and 1871

The 2½ story stone Second Empire house located on the east side of Knox Street just north of Queen Lane in central Germantown bases its significance upon its contribution to the neighborhood as a whole, rather than to any individual merit it might possess. With the exception of the removal of its front porch, it has remained remarkable well preserved during its 113 year existence.

On 29 March 1966, the old Historic Values Committee recommended the certification of 114 mid-19th century dwellings throughout central Germantown west of Germantown Avenue. The Commission accepted the recommendations of the Committee later that same day. In its ongoing review of the Commission records, the staff uncovered a mistake in the Committee report. It listed 5305-5307 Knox Street, a non-existent address, and failed to include 5321 Knox Street, although all other houses on the odd side of Knox Street were included in the certifications of that day. It appears to have been the intent of the Committee, and the Commission, to certify 5321 Knox Street but owing to a bureaucratic error it listed the wrong address. In past years, some copies of the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places have been amended to correct this mistake. However, the Commission itself has not authorized the correction in its records.

The Committee on Certification, acting upon the staff request, recommended that 5305-5307 Knox Street be stricken from the list and replaced with 5321 Knox Street.

2024 Locust Street: Jane E. Welton House
1892: Willis G. Hale, architect; B. K. Ketcham's Sons, contractors

Originally nominated at the 8 December 1983 meeting and sent to the staff for revisions, the Jane E. Welton House stands as a four story brick dwelling erected in 1892-1893 from the designs of Willis G. Hale. It rests its significance primarily upon its architectural merits. It reflects much of the architectural flavor of Rittenhouse Square and contributes greatly to the overall ambience of the area. Willis Hale counted many members of the Philadelphia nouveau riche among his clients including Peter A. B. Widener, William Elkins and William Weightman. Widener and Weightman both lived in Hale-designed mansions. All three used Hale extensively for their myriad speculative housing projects of the latter fifth of the 19th century. Typified by the row at 1500-1524 N. 17th Street (certified by the Commission on 3 March 1983), Hale's commissions usually reflected in architectural terms the dynamic forces characterizing 19th century America. Jane Welton, a widow, probably contributed

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a great amount of restraint to Hale's normal exuberance when the latter designed the original 3-story brick dwelling along Locust Street. The mansard roof was added in 1909 when the second owner of the building sought more space in the building.

The Committee recommended unanimously that the Commission certify 2024 Locust Street, the Jane E. Welton House.

2136 Locust Street: Frank Samuel Residence

1899-1900: Theophilus Parsons Chandler, architect; Hayes Mendenhall, builder

Certified by the Commission on 5 January 1984, the owner of this building replied to the Commission's letter: "We do not want the building certified." The Committee tabled the matter and directed the staff to contact the owner to ascertain his objections to certification.

832-836 Lombard Street: Lombard Street Central Presbyterian Church (Colored)

1846-1848: William L. Johnston, architect; Lippincott & Forsyth, builders

This church building, now occupied by the Pentecostal Bridegroom Church, stands 2 stories high and possesses a stuccoed brick facade. It claims significance on three levels: architecture, religion and black history. Its style results from a mix between the Greek Revival popular during the first half of the 19th century and the Renaissance Revival just beginning to become popular in architectural and social circles. Its architect, William L. Johnston (1811-1849) designed several notable buildings during his short career but with the exception of this building and the entrance to Hood Cemetery at Germantown Avenue and Logan Street in Germantown, no structure identified with him has survived. His career was cut short by an early death but he had already started work on what would become a notable building in American architecture: Dr. Jayne's Granite Building at 242-244 Chestnut Street.

The congregation which hired Johnston is a splinter group broken from the Second African Presbyterian Church. Organized on 22 July 1844, the members of the church laid the cornerstone of this building during August 1846 and dedicated the edifice in February 1848. The Lombard Street Central Presbyterian Church stayed in this location until 1940 when they sold this building and ground to the Pentecostal Bridegroom Church which currently serves the black population of the area. The Lombard Central Presbyterian Church, which dropped the word "Street" from its name, occupies a former Friends meetinghouse at 40th Street and Powelton Avenue, a building already certified by this Commission.

On 23 July 1963, the Historic Values Committee recommended the certification of 194 buildings in the Washington Square West neighborhood. However it appended no list of buildings to the report. Instead it submitted marked copies of an 1858 Hexamer & Locher insurance map. A list of buildings prepared in 1973 using a set of marked maps in the Commission's files indicates a large number of buildings which never appeared on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places making it difficult to justify the legality of those buildings appearing without prior or subsequent certification action. The staff requested the Committee to submit a recommendation to the Commission to either reaffirm the earlier action or to strike the building from the Philadelphia Register. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Commission reaffirm its earlier certification of 832-836 Lombard Street, the Lombard Street Central Presbyterian Church.

1200 Lombard Street: Fourth Presbyterian Church, now St. Peter Claver's R.C. Church
1841-1842: Thomas U. Walter, architect; John Lindsay, builder

also: 1210 Lombard Street: St. Peter Claver's School (1906-1908)
502 S. 12th Street : St. Peter Claver's Rectory (1895, Edwin F. Durang)

The three buildings comprised within the complex of St. Peter Claver's Roman Catholic Church possess significance on account of their architecture, their association with the entire black Catholic movement of the late 19th century, and black history in general. In addition, the main building of the group, the church structure, has additional significance as a work of Thomas U. Walter.

When considered in light of Walter's contemporary and major works of Girard College, Andalusia, Preston Retreat, et al, the Fourth Presbyterian Church does not stand as one of Walter's monuments. Its style reveals the middle-class conservatism of Philadelphians loath to abandon the plain brick meetinghouse for some radical design. However, little of Walter's minor commissions have either survived or been recognized within the city limits.

Walter's client, the Fourth Presbyterian Church, had broken from the Third Presbyterian Church (Old Pine) in June 1799. The Pennsylvania Legislature granted this lot at 12th and Lombard for their use in 1800 but it was not until 1841 that the church needed it to house their growing congregation. It remained in their possession until it moved to 47th and Kingsessing Street in 1891, at which location it stayed until its dissolution in 1983. With the abandonment of the building by the Fourth Presbyterian, the property became the focal point of the attempt to establish a black Catholic church as it stood in the heart of Philadelphia's black district. The Holy Ghost Fathers, then located in Pittsburgh, sent several ministers who aided in the establishment of the St. Peter Claver Roman Catholic Church, which was formally dedicated on 3 January 1892. To provide aids for their ministry, the Holy Ghost

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Fathers hired Edwin F. Durang to design a rectory which is located on the rear of the church lot, and authorized the construction of the three story stone school house to the west of the original church building.

The church building has appeared on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places probably since the 1963 action mentioned in the report on 832-836 Lombard Street. The Committee, acting on the staff's request, recommended that the Commission reaffirm the listing of the original building at 1200 Lombard Street and certify both the rectory at 502 S. 12th Street and the school at 1210 Lombard Street.

7980-7982 Oxford Avenue

The Commission received a letter from Robert R. Rosen, engineer, dated 2 March 1984 containing a request from the owner of the captioned property for decertification of this building. Current photographs supplied with the request demonstrated that a number of alterations had occurred to the building since the Commission certified it on 29 November 1966, most of which were accomplished without Commission review. Owing to the altered state of the structure, and the lack of any information on the building in the Commission's files, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Commission comply with the request to decertify 7980-7982 Oxford Avenue.

36-38 N. 3rd Street: John Wister Development Properties 1851-1852

Finished by the middle of 1852, these two five-story commercial buildings have cast-iron facades fronting the two lower floors and brick faces above. A fire in March 1980 caused extensive damage to the two buildings, however photographs and insurance surveys provide sufficient documentation to aid in the proper restoration of each property.

John Wister, the developer, maintained his residence at Vernon in Germantown and owned these, and four or five other properties, as investment properties to be used by him and his children to provide enough income for them to live as landed gentry. The family retained 36 & 38 N. 3rd Street well into the 20th century.

The users of the buildings have been typical of the type of business associated with Old City during the middle and late 19th century. Ludwig, Kneidler & Company, Dry Goods, moved into 36 N. 3rd Street shortly after completion from another location of 3rd Street near Race. This firm later became Kneidler, Patterson & Company and remained on the premises until ca. 1880. Ironically, another dry goods concern, Universal Dry Goods, occupies this building in 1984. Wm. P. Wilstach & Company, Carriage Trimmings, Saddlery

Hardware, Etc., became Scott & Day in the 1870s and Conrad Day & Company in the 1880s, still occupying 38 N. 3rd Street and still carrying the same merchandise as the Wilstach firm. William P. Wilstach achieved belated prominence in another field. He and his wife assembled a large art collection which was given to the City of Philadelphia and eventually formed the core of the present Philadelphia Museum of Art collections.

On 7 September 1972, the Commission certified the "Old City Historic District", without designating specific addresses within the district. Since the Commission does not currently have the power to create a district, the staff has, in an ongoing manner, requested the Commission to reaffirm and ratify the listings of the buildings within the Old City Historic District which trace their certifications to this action. The Committee recommended unanimously that the Commission ratify the certifications of 36 and 38 N. 3rd Street.

1726-1748 N. 17th Street, a.k.a. 1700-1720 W. Montgomery Avenue: The Wagner
Free Institute of Science
1860-1864: John McArthur, Jr., architect; Warren & Kirk, builders

A two story, stuccoed brick building, the Wagner Free Institute building owes its existence to two men: Professor William Wagner and John McArthur, Jr. Wagner (1796-1885) worked in the office of Stephen Girard from 1814 to 1818 before opening his own ventures. By the 1840s he retired to devote his time to his scientific studies which included free lectures to the public. He expanded these lectures and formally incorporated the Wagner Free Institute of Science in 1855 with a faculty of some of the more notable men in the various fields of science and engineering. Disagreements with the City over the use of Commissioners' Hall in Spring Garden led to the decision to erect the present edifice on Wagner's farm in North Philadelphia.

Wagner hired John McArthur to design his new museum. McArthur had garnered a reputation during the previous ten years with his design of several churches throughout the Philadelphia area. He was adding to it during the Civil War with designs of numerous military-related buildings and crowned his career by winning the competition, and supervising the construction, for Philadelphia's City Hall.

The Wagner Institute building has remained relatively intact over its life. Some interior alterations occurred in 1885-1886 and a large 1-story side addition was added in 1901 to house Branch Number 1 of the Free Library of Philadelphia, a branch which used the Wagner premises from 1892 until 1962, when the Library constructed a new building for it.

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A review of the Commission records fails to reveal any formal Commission action regarding certification of the Wagner Free Institute of Science, although the building has appeared on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places for many years. The Committee concurred with the staff request and recommended that the Commission reaffirm the listing of the Wagner Free Institute of Science, located on the southwest corner of 17th Street and Montgomery Avenue, citing its significance as an architectural landmark, and its associations with science, education and Philadelphia's institutional history.

501 S. 41st Street, a.k.a. 4040 Baltimore Avenue: Gunter Apartments
1913-1914: Milligan & Pierson, architects; John P. Deacon, builder

Designed with Georgian Revival detail, this four-story brick apartment house stands as a representative of the low-cost, medium-sized apartment houses of the early twentieth century found throughout Philadelphia and especially concentrated in West Philadelphia. The architect, Samuel Milligan, had spent a number of years as a partner with Frederick Webber (Milligan & Webber), learning the art of apartment house design from the man generally considered as a leading practitioner of the art. Milligan & Webber designed many important buildings including Hamilton Court at 39th & Chestnut Street, the Belgravia at 1811 Chestnut Street and the Coronado at 2201 Chestnut Street.

On 23 February 1971, the Historical Commission certified "S. 41st Street, Hamilton Terrace between Woodland and Baltimore Avenues". As a result of this action all addresses along the 500 block of south 41st Street were added to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places including those buildings clearly not part of the original 19th century Hamilton Terrace. A staff review of records recently uncovered the listing of this apartment house along with the two mentioned below in the minutes. In absence of other records, the review of the photographs in file would indicate that the Commission was concerned with only the 19th century buildings along the street.

The staff requested the Committee to reevaluate the 20th century buildings and submit a recommendation to either reaffirm the certifications recognizing their value and importance to 20th century, rather than 19th century, architecture, or to decertify and strike them from the Philadelphia Register. Mr. Myers argued that the Commission should reaffirm the earlier certification stating that although the building in question does not conform to the original character of the neighborhood, it does illustrate the progression of architecture in general and the changing character of West Philadelphia near the University of Pennsylvania. He moved that the Committee recommend reaffirmation of 501 S. 41st Street, a.k.a. 4040 Baltimore Avenue, the Gunter Apartments. The Committee voted unanimously in concurrence with the motion.

500 S. 41st Street, a.k.a. 4100-4112 Baltimore Avenue: Patricia Apartments
1910: Alexander Wilson, developer

A two story brick walkup apartment complex, the Patricia Apartments, like other apartment houses in the area, replaced a mid-19th century residence. Fronted by the two story high porches which gives the building its distinguishing character, the Patricia harmonizes with its immediate area and by facing Baltimore Avenue, forms a buffer to the quiet residential 41st Street from the bustle of Baltimore Avenue.

A search through the records has failed to reveal either the name of the architect or the builder for the Patricia Apartments. Alexander Wilson, who resided at 52nd and Haverford, also commissioned the Alexandra Apartments at 42nd and Chester in 1909. The Alexandra was designed by Clement Remington of Haddington, N. J. However, the plainness of the Patricia and the difference in scale and detail of it from the Alexandra would indicate that Wilson probably severed his connection with Remington and designed and built this apartment house without the aid of an architect.

The building itself is typical of the two-story walkup apartments found throughout West Philadelphia along the major transportation arteries. Listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places under its 41st Street address, the staff requested the Committee to review its certification. Again Mr. Myers advocated the reaffirmation of the listing of this building for many of the same reasons he put forth in the case of the Gunter: scale, architectural character and its representative place in the overall development of the area. The Committee recommended the reaffirmation of the certification of 500 S. 41st Street, a.k.a. 4100-4112 Baltimore Avenue, the Patricia Apartments. Mrs. Klein abstained.

506 S. 41st Street: Florence Garden Apartments
1928-1929: Richard Litman, architect; Nathan Litman, developer

The Florence Garden Apartments, a four story yellow brick apartment house, stands along the west side of 41st Street between Baltimore and Chester Avenues. One of many apartment buildings constructed throughout West Philadelphia during the first third of the twentieth century, Florence Garden exhibits many of the elements which typify the 1920s vintage apartment house: the carved entranceway, the flat appearance of the facade, the use of brick for architectural adornment, the carved shield above the top floor and the absence of a cornice. This building appears as the only commission known by Richard Litman, however Nathan Litman sponsored the construction of many apartment buildings in the area between 1926 and 1930. In terms of architectural development of the apartment house, Florence Garden incorporates many of the elements which were acceptable for apartment house design of the period but the overall design is indeed a typical one and not one which acted as a trend-setter or a precursor of future designs.

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The Committee found little merit in this building and unanimously recommended that the Commission decertify 506 S. 41st Street, the Florence Garden, and strike it from the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

300 S. 36th Street, a.k.a. 3600 Locust Street: Psi Upsilon
1899-1900: G.W. & W.D. Hewitt, architects (William D. Hewitt in charge)

The Hewitts designed the Psi Upsilon house in a Jacobethan style similar to work executed by Cope & Stewardson and Frank Miles Day & Brother but have added stone battlements and a stone facade to a style normally using brick. The structure bases its significance not only upon its architecture and connection with a revered architectural firm but also because it is the first structure on the University of Pennsylvania campus expressly constructed to house a fraternal organization. The Hewitt firm by 1899 was one of the senior firms in the city, G.W. Hewitt having served his apprenticeship with Joseph C. Hoxie, John Notman and John Fraser during the Civil War period. A list of the firm's numerous commissions include many of the major buildings in the region including the Bourse Building, the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel and the Civic Center Museum. Its client, Psi Upsilon, was founded in February 1887 as the Upsilon Kappa Society and was formally inducted into the Psi Upsilon Fraternity in 1891. Many prominent Americans were members of the Tau Chapter located at Penn including Henry W. Thornton, who headed the British transportation system during World War I, Francis S. McIlhenny, a prominent member of the Philadelphia bar, and Owen J. Roberts, justice of the U.S. Supreme Court from 1930 to 1945.

The Committee unanimously recommended certification of 300 S. 36th Street, a.k.a. 3600 Locust Street, Psi Upsilon Fraternity house.

Spring Garden Historic District

The Historic Neighborhood Alliance nominated 7 buildings in the 1500 block of Brandywine Street, 27 buildings in the same number block of Green Street and 19 buildings on the 1500 block of Mt. Vernon Street. It submitted the National Register district nomination form with an inventory of the buildings nominated. The descriptions and significance submitted for each building proved insufficient for the needs of the Committee to make a fair evaluation. Mr. Myers objected to the format of the nomination, stating that since the Commission did not enjoy district powers, a district nomination should not be submitted. He requested that future nominations concern only individual buildings or groups of buildings with enough information to fully describe the current condition and appearance of the structure or structures and to justify their certification. He then moved that the nomination of the Spring Garden buildings be tabled. The Committee unanimously concurred.

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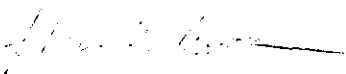
OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Myers brought in an article which contained a description of "Pompeian brick" and acknowledged that he erred in stating that no such brick type existed. He would endeavor to procure a sample and demonstrate the differences between the Pompeian brick as shown in the article and the brick type used extensively in Philadelphia during the later 19th and early 20th centuries.

The next meeting of the Committee on Certification is scheduled for Tuesday, 22 May 1984, at 2:30 p.m. in Room 1313 City Hall Annex.

There being no further business before the Committee, a motion was made and approved that the meeting adjourn, which it did at 4:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Jefferson M. Moak
Executive Secretary

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
COMMITTEE ON CERTIFICATION
MINUTES

8 March 1984

Present: Mrs. Klein, Messrs. Baldinger, Mooney, Myers, Thompson and Pinkowski,
Chairman.

Also Present: Dr. Tyler and Mr. Moak, staff; John Hannum, Roxborough-Manayunk-
Wissahickon Historical Society.

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