

THE EIGHTEENTH MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

January 7, 1958

Present were: Mr. R. Norris Williams, II
Mr. Harry A. Batten
Mr. Charles E. Peterson

Mr. H. B. McDowell, Deputy Director of Finance
Mr. George Lovatt, City Architect
Dr. Margaret B. Tinkcom, Historian
Mr. Grant M. Simon, Chairman

Mrs. Charles J. Maurer, Executive Secretary

The Meeting came to order at 3:45 P. M. in Room 313, Courtesy of the Art Commission.

The Minutes of the previous meeting, November 26, 1957 were approved.

MR. DAWSON'S REPORT OF INSPECTION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The Chairman read a letter from Mr. Dawson, Chief of Building Inspection Section in the Department of Licenses & Inspections, in connection with inspecting historic buildings. When his report is complete in the near future, the Commission will hear from him again.

AN EXAMPLE OF HISTORICAL MATERIAL AS AN EXHIBIT 320 South Fourth Street

Dr. Tinkcom gave a report on this house as "a typical case history", consisting of an Inventory Work Sheet, a photograph, a Verifax copy of the insurance survey, 1858, when the house was insured with the Mutual Assurance Company, and measured drawings by Mr. George Robbins, architect. Asked about the cost of this exhibit, the Historian reported that the drawings cost \$200, the title search by the Commission's assistant historian cost about \$10.00. This last is quite different from the estimated cost given by the Commonwealth Title Company. This would have consisted of a pencilled list of information sources, costing \$45.00 for each title search.

It was suggested that if such material were available for houses on the Certified List, many owners would be willing to invest say \$250. for it; that it would increase the market value of the house. It was further suggested that this material would make an interesting exhibit on a number of important houses under the auspices of N. W. Ayer; and would achieve additional recognition and publicity for the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

It was asked whether the Commission would have authority to sell this material to an individual; the answer from Mr. McDowell was that it might be accepted as a reimbursement for the cost of the survey.

The Chairman asked how many HABS Forms had been filed with the Library of Congress. The Historian reported that twelve work sheets have been filled out; that these must be typed and photographs made. It was suggested that the office send ten a month to Washington from now on.

The Chairman reported that the National Park Service personnel is available to make ink tracings of Mr. Robbins' line drawings. These tracings will also be sent to the Library of Congress together with the HABS Forms.

REPORT ON MR. BRUMBAUGH'S WORK

A report on the Head House of Second Street Market was given in brief; more to be said when the research is complete.

THE SCHUYLKILL ARSENAL

The Commission was advised that the Government contemplated disposal of this property. There was discussion in brief and action deferred until the next meeting.

CUTHBERT STREET HOUSES

It was reported that the razing of these is imminent. The Chairman said that Mr. Robbins knows the owner, Mr. Wm. T. Newbold. Relationship and geographic position of Cuthbert St. to Elfreth's Alley was shown and it was recommended that the Chairman write to Mr. Edward Bacon of the City Planning Commission, asking where the Expressway will go in relation to these buildings. It was decided that the Chairman will get in touch with Mr. Robbins, report on Mr. Newbold's position in the matter and call Mr. Batton on the results.

NURSES' HOME FOR THE PENNSYLVANIA HOSPITAL

It was reported that houses between 718 Spruce Street and the corner of 8th, are to come down to make room for a new building. Plans for this are said to be inappropriate for that section of Spruce Street. It was resolved that a letter be sent to Mr. Morris Cheston, President of the Board of the Pennsylvania Hospital, asking about the proposed plan and that a copy of the letter be sent to Mr. Bacon.

A RESOLUTION was passed that Mr. Robbins be informed that the Board considers his line drawings to have been well done.

HEIGHT OF BUILDINGS IN THE SOCIETY HILL AREA

It was asked whether a restriction would be in force in connection with the proposed hotel to be built at the corner of 7th and Locust Streets, south side of Washington Square. Opinion was that a twenty-story building would be preferable to a parking lot if the architecture were correct for the neighborhood, but that no building over sixty feet high would be appropriate east of Sixth Street.

PLAQUES FOR HISTORIC HOUSES

It appears that aluminum plaques are less expensive than iron and do not stain. A more complete report will be forthcoming at the next meeting.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

It was Resolved that the Commission become a member. Dues are \$25.00 per year.

PURCHASE OF EQUIPMENT FOR THE OFFICE

It was moved and seconded that the Commission purchase a bookcase and a filing case; that efforts be made to obtain chairs through other channels before buying any, but in any case to get at least two.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

IT WAS RESOLVED that the next meeting be held at the usual time on the last Tuesday in the month, January 28, 1958.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT FOR THE COMMISSION

On February 5, 1958, a meeting of The Spruce Street Area Improvement Association will be held at the Seamens' Church Institute, Locust & Camac Streets, on "The Spruce Street Story". It was recommended that the Association invite Mr. Bacon to speak on the future plans. The Executive Secretary of the Commission has been asked to speak on the early history of Spruce Street.

LETTER FROM THE PHILADELPHIA SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LANDMARKS.

A copy of a letter addressed to Mr. Wm. Day, President of the Old Philadelphia Corporation, dated December 31, 1957, was sent to the Commission for its information. It concerns buildings proposed for the Dock Street Area. The letter said in part that "buildings to be erected should not be anti-residential in character; that they conform to the dignity of the neighborhood." A police station is proposed for the corner of Second & Spruce Streets. After general discussion, opinion was that this would be more suitable than a school at the junction of these two busy thoroughfares.

Mr. Peterson was requested to draw up a list of the twenty-five houses which he considers are of historic value, between Spruce and Pine Streets on the east side of Second Street. These should be capable of being restored as dwellings. He maintained that such a number exists and that the list will be presented at the next meeting. Further discussion was deferred pending submission of this list.

CHURCH AT THE CORNER OF BROAD AND SOUTH STREETS

The Chairman read a letter from a member of a religious group which has recently purchased this building, asking for advice in restoring it. It was the opinion of the Board that the Commission cannot give this kind of advice, but that if any historical information is available which would make the church of value for the Certified List, the Commission would be glad to be informed.

The Meeting adjourned at 4:50 P. M.

Respectfully submitted

Charles E. Peterson, Secretary