

THE MINUTES OF THE 348TH STATED MEETING
OF THE

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

9 January 1991

Mayoral Reception Room

Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman

Present: Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman
Christine Washington, Vice-Chairwoman
David Brownlee
David Hollenberg
Jason Nathan
Reverend William D. Thompson
Peter Aborn, Deputy Commissioner,
Department of Public Property
James Cuorato, Department of Commerce
Barbara Kaplan, Executive Director,
City Planning Commission
Scott Wilds, Office of Housing and Community Development
David Wismer, Department of Licenses and Inspections

Herbert W. Levy, Architectural Committee

Maria Petrillo, Esq., Deputy City Solicitor
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Sara Jane Elk, Historical Research Technician
Frederick Richards, Preservation Consultant
Daniel W. Simcox, Executive Secretary

Also:

Sheldon Hackney, President, University of Pennsylvania
Barry S. Cooperman, Vice-Provost for University Research
Solomon Pollack, Professor and Chairman, Dept. of Bioengineering
Robert Venturi, Principal, Venturi, Scott-Brown and Associates
Marna Whittington, University Senior Vice-President
Michael J. Lewis, Department of Art, Bryn Mawr College
Robert Kohler, Professor of History & Sociology of Science
John Blatteau, John Blatteau Associates, Architects
James Collins, Jr., Payette Associates
George Thomas, CLIO Group, Inc.
Howard Kittell, Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
Michael D. Hardy, University City Historical Society
Gray Smith, Architect
Alan MacDiarmid and Edward R. Thornton, Professors of Chemistry
Hai-Lung Dai, David W. Christianson, Ass't Professors, Chemistry
James P. Colgate, Elizabeth Hunt, John Colby Parker

Michael Aiken, Arthur Gravina, Amos B. Smith III, David Marohn,
Jason Brody and Steven Wiesenthal, Thomas Hine, Deborah Kelly,
Charles Rosenberg, Henricka Kuklick, Mark B. Thompson, W. Wong,
R. Holcomb, M. Miller, F. Nelson, F. Blase, T. Keenan, D. Jones,
J. McCauley, G. Palladino, and others.

The Minutes of the 347th Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 14 November 1990, Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman. A MOTION to adopt the minutes, made by Mr. Nathan and seconded by Mr. Wilds, received unanimous Commission approval.

The Report of the Architectural Committee of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 29 November 1990, David Hollenberg, Chairman. The Committee reviewed four applications and forwarded the following recommendations:

Approval

The Committee recommended approval of a proposal to install a metal exhaust duct on the Filbert Street facade of the Lit Brothers Building, 701-735 Market Street. The Committee recommended approval, contingent upon the fabrication of the ductwork with a baked enamel coating. Mr. Nathan seconded this recommendation, which the Commission approved unanimously.

Disapproval

The Committee reviewed an application for work undertaken without a permit to this early 19th century store at 147 North 3rd Street. The owner began replacing original 6/6 wooden sash with white aluminum sash on the visible facades. Having received a violation and Stop Work Order, he installed the new windows inside of the original sash of the front facade. On the side, however, he replaced the original sash with one-over-one aluminum sash. The Old City Civic Association urged the Committee to disapprove this application. In support, OCCA identified more than twenty neighbors who installed proper replacement windows. The Committee recommended disapproval and the re-installation of six-over-six, true-muntin sash on the side elevation. They also insisted that the applicant remove the snap-in muntins from the sash on the front facade.

The Committee also recommended disapproval of a proposal to install a semi-circular sign fabricated with a brushed-brass finish and individual white plastic letters which would project from the entry of 260 South 15th Street. Small brass plaques on both sides of the entrance would be acceptable.

Mr. Wismer seconded the two preceding recommendations which the Commission adopted unanimously.

Divided Recommendation

The Committee also reviewed a demolition permit application submitted by the University of Pennsylvania for Smith Hall, 215 South 34th Street. Penn sought this permit as part of a three-phase plan to develop an Institute for Advanced Science and Technology. Smith Hall, built in 1892 in a German Institutional style, possesses significance as a landmark of late nineteenth century educational and scientific reforms, as a significant

element in the historic landscape of Smith Walk and as a fine example of the work of the regionally important architectural firm of Collins and Autenrieth. The Commission designated Smith Hall in October 1989 along with the adjacent Music and Morgan Buildings. Dr. DeLong and Messrs. Hollenberg and Atkin abstained from the discussion and vote because of their affiliations with the University. Herbert Levy presided as chairman. Having reviewed a feasibility study prepared by Venturi, Scott-Brown and Associates, the Committee heard testimony from the University administration and its consultants. Several advocates for the preservation of Smith Hall also testified. After three hours, the Committee deferred this matter and requested further information from the principal advocates and opponents of the demolition request. A special meeting was scheduled for 18 December 1990 at the Annenberg School of the University.

At this special meeting, the University presented a revised design alternative, previously requested by the Committee. This scheme, referred to as Scheme 3a, would entail demolition of the Duhring addition to Smith Hall and construction of the wet-lab facility on its site. Following four hours of testimony, Mr. Levy suggested convening a third meeting solely for Committee questions and deliberations. However, the other three voting members indicated, in response to an inquiry from Miss Petrillo, that they were prepared to forward a recommendation. Assuming that the chairman abstained, Miss Petrillo announced a vote of 2-1 recommending disapproval of the request. Yet, the meeting had not adjourned and Mr. Levy voted in favor of the permit, resulting in a 2-2 vote. After this vote, the Committee adjourned and forwarded a divided recommendation.

Mr. Montgomery expressed appreciation to the Architectural Committee for its dedication and service, then announced the procedural rules for this meeting, previously agreed upon by all parties. The University and the opponents of the proposal would have forty-five minutes for a formal presentation, followed by ten minutes each for rebuttal or comment. In addition, time would be available for public comment. Dr. Brownlee announced that, like Mr. Hollenberg, he would abstain from the proceedings because of his affiliation with the University.

Presentation by the University of Pennsylvania

Dr. Sheldon Hackney, President of the University of Pennsylvania, requested a demolition permit for Smith Hall based on the provisions of the Philadelphia Code related to the demolition of historic buildings for reasons of economic hardship and the public interest. He noted that both Mr. Tyler and Brenda Barrett, the latter offering only a preliminary report from the Bureau for Historic Preservation, indicated that the Smith site is the most prudent and feasible for the Institute. Further, its final design will complement the surrounding historic district. The use of state and federal funds will ensure design review by relevant government agencies, and discussion will ensue within the University community.

Dr. Hackney indicated that this request was difficult for him.

As an historian and president of a University which recently celebrated its 250th anniversary, he sincerely appreciated Penn's heritage. From its modest beginnings on Fourth Street, the University has grown to its present status as an international academic institution of the first rank, noted for the education of its students and the excellence of its research. Through this history, change has been a hallmark of the University, which did not move to West Philadelphia until 1872. Change has allowed Penn to assume a prestigious reputation as a premiere center of higher learning, particularly noted for its ability to foster innovative, interdisciplinary research. As an institution, Penn will never be completed; each generation must renew it in light of current realities. As the world changes and as our knowledge expands, Penn also must grow. Through this development it must strike a balance between honoring its past and preparing for its future. The Institute development plan, the result of a long and careful study of Penn's duty to preserve its important buildings and its critical need to develop new research facilities, achieves that goal.

A generation ago, Penn was not always as sensitive to the former charge as it might have been. During the past decade, in part through interaction with the Commission, the University has improved its record considerably. Recently, it completed an inventory of historic resources with the advice of Drs. Brownlee, DeLong and Thomas. The program in Historic Preservation is now represented on the University Design Review Committee, which examines plans for new construction as well as renovations. Historic preservation is now an integral part of the campus plan. Already, the University has undertaken or has plans for the restoration or rehabilitation of the Quadrangle Dormitories (\$40 million), the University Museum (\$3 million), the Veterinary Hospital (\$4 million), the Evans Dental Building (\$7 million), Furness Library (\$16.5 million), College Hall (\$18 million) and Logan Hall (\$15 million). A recent audit of campus facilities revealed additional needs for maintenance and restoration which would cost \$180 to \$200 million. The plan for this work will be guided by the priorities established in the "Advisory Report on Historic Resources."

Though fortunate to possess a rich architectural heritage, Penn faces the vexing problem of ensuring the sustained development of its intellectual endeavors on a dense urban campus with many buildings considered historically or architecturally significant. To meet its intellectual mission, Penn must be permitted to make those changes deemed critical for its future. The Institute is one of these critical changes. This development is part of a comprehensive plan to reinvigorate research endeavors in order to preserve and enhance Penn's position as a leading international university. This initiative is critical because Penn has not been able to make appropriate investments in the fields of engineering and the natural sciences. Though research costs have increased and competition from other schools has grown keener, the facilities at Penn have remained obsolete. Research has been impaired and programs compromised by a lack of space and special facilities. The Institute will ensure Penn, Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley a place in the vanguard of scientific research in the 21st century.

This development, unfortunately, requires the demolition of Smith Hall. However, this site was chosen only after a thoughtful assessment of viable alternatives. Development on a remote site would divide the programs, require costly duplication of resources and divert funds outside this historic precinct, away from the renovation and restoration of Hayden Hall and the Towne, Morgan and Music Buildings. Another alternative, design scheme 3a, is neither consistent with the principles of architecture, urban design and historic preservation nor desirable for programmatic and financial concerns. Further, the architectural and historic significance of Smith Hall remains a point of debate. The salient question, however, is not whether it is significant, but rather how significant. Advocates for the preservation of Smith Hall will testify that it is the last remaining pioneer laboratory designed to allow students to conduct scientific experiments themselves, to learn by doing and to create new knowledge. Dr. Hackney acknowledged that, as an historian, he too would like to preserve those structures which facilitate an understanding of the past. However, as University president, he must ensure that Penn meets its obligation to provide the finest teaching and research facilities for his faculty and students. Last year's 250th Anniversary of the University, which honored its distinguished history, reinforced an understanding that Penn rose to its current stature because it had not been constrained by its past. The University simply cannot afford to memorialize every physical space on campus where new teaching methods were born or discovery occurred. Just as part of Smith Hall was demolished to accommodate programmatic needs in science, the University now must build new facilities suitable for critical scientific research.

Trying to predict expansion in this precinct beyond twenty years is a speculative venture. However, other than modest renovations to existing buildings, Penn does not foresee any additional development on this block. Assuming that the science programs continue to upgrade their facilities, one of the major users may relocate to a remote site. This natural, cost-effective development may not occur for many years. Before then, Penn will have restored four historic buildings in the precinct and assured that it possesses the best facilities for academic and research endeavors. The University's greatest challenge is to sustain its position at the intellectual vanguard. To meet this challenge, it cannot stand still; to do so seems a certain way to fall behind. Penn can fulfill its promise as a great university only by pursuing the paradoxical truth that the only way for it to remain true to its heritage is to adapt in order to meet new challenges. Penn established this basic personality long ago, and the more it has changed, the more it has invigorated its energetic and inventive spirit. In making this request, Penn carefully weighed its responsibilities to itself and the city; for the benefit of both, Dr. Hackney requested approval of this request for demolition.

Dr. Barry Cooperman, Vice-Provost for University Research, explained the urgent demand for new research facilities for the engineering and the natural sciences. Penn last constructed facilities for research in these fields in 1973. Since then, they have expanded considerably, with a current budget near \$35

million per year. There have been rapid increases in the amount of research funding and in the number of graduate students and post-doctoral fellows. To accommodate this growth, labs have been created in hallways and restrooms. The development of the Institute would alleviate this spatial problem. Further, its contiguous facilities will promote interdisciplinary inquiry.

The departments selected for this project not only evinced the most urgent spatial needs but also possessed the greatest intellectual vibrancy, the highest comparative advantage for development at Penn and the most evident potential for interaction with the industries of the region. The Institute will serve as a mutually beneficial center for technology transfer, where research partnerships with regional corporations will drive scientific research and technological innovation. The Institute plan has three phases, the first of which is critical to develop as proposed. The construction of a wet-lab facility on the Smith site will link the new space to the 1973 Chemistry Building. This contiguity will promote the optimal use of space and allow professors to supervise both their research and their undergraduates. Further, it will facilitate collaborative research. Alternative scheme 3a not only fails to achieve the same benefit, but also may require simultaneous development of Phases I and II. This option, which would incur a higher debt service, is so undesirable as to place the Institute plan at risk. Building on a remote site possesses even higher costs and more numerous reasons for not proceeding with the development of the Institute. Dr. Cooperman concluded by stressing that the Smith site is optimal for reasons related to intellectual interaction, economy, safety and construction phasing.

Dr. Solomon Pollack, Professor and Acting Chairman of the Department of Bioengineering, stressed the importance of collaborative research in contemporary scientific research. Though his department is ranked among the top five programs nationally, it occupies inadequate facilities in the basement and first floor of Hayden Hall. This problem impairs research into the preservation of life and the improvement of the quality of life. The contiguous facilities proposed for the Institute will foster this critical research.

Robert Venturi, principal of Venturi, Scott-Brown and Associates, contrasted the architectural and aesthetic values of design scheme 7, recommended by the architects, and scheme 3a, which entails the demolition of the Duhring wing and the construction of a new building on its site. Mr. Venturi suggested that 3a constituted a perceptual demolition of Smith Hall by retaining part of it as a remnant which would be overwhelmed by the new building. This scheme not only extends the massiveness of the Chemistry Building into Smith Walk but also destroys the rear courtyard. Further, it would require the disruption and re-rating of mechanical systems at a cost nearly \$5.2 million more than the preferred scheme. In sum, although Scheme 3a meets the spatial requirements, it entails higher construction costs, less floor plan flexibility and a more adverse impact on the site. In contrast, Scheme 7 offers numerous amenities. It provides a linear public facade and creates a gracious interior courtyard, like many other historic buildings in Philadelphia. The new

building will establish an impressive gateway for Smith Walk and offer an interesting juxtaposition of buildings from different periods, an aesthetic common to the campus. This plan also offers a more complete alignment of floor plans which will facilitate academic collaboration and offer thirty percent more windows. Further, its inflection of the western end of Smith Walk toward the northwest possesses several advantages. This minor realignment will enhance pedestrian circulation and public safety. It also will provide a more interesting focus on the Furness Building, adding an element of surprise to pedestrians turning toward its apse. Given the programmatic needs of the Institute and its enhancement of the surrounding historic precinct, Scheme 7 is more appropriate.

This scheme fits into a tradition of infill expansion in vital urban environments. Growth is natural to dynamic institutions like universities and essential within contemporary science precincts. Though historically most American growth has been through expansion, there is ample precedent for development through replacement. This infill mode was dominant in European cities enclosed by military walls; so now with American universities and particularly their science precincts which face considerable pressure for new facilities. Infill development contributes to the vitality of a place. The increased concentration of activity tends to enhance spatial flexibility and economy as well as human communication and collaboration. Further, infill development can enhance its surroundings by enriching the exterior spaces and providing interesting juxtapositions of architectural styles and building types. Even though all moments during the evolution of such places may not exude smooth aesthetic effects, the mixture of styles offers an aesthetic richness if not purity. This vitality is heightened by the contrast of two primary building types: linear, which define space, and sculptural, which occupy space. Contemporary science laboratories, shaped by their requirements for flexible loft space and dominant mechanical systems, are superb contemporary examples of a linear building. On the Smith site, such a building will provide a beautiful counterpoint to the sculptural qualities of the Furness Library and Irvine Auditorium. Through the use of similar materials, the new building will complement its setting. Further, its linear facade may be enriched through rhythm, hierarchy of detail, and setbacks.

Mr. Venturi noted that Smith Hall, unlike the Wistar Institute, is no longer viable for scientific research. Adding that he interpreted Smith as neither stylistically advanced nor a unique expression of function and democracy, Mr. Venturi suggested that it may be considered retardataire, or old-fashioned when it was built in 1890. While critics similarly may dismiss the Furness Library as retardataire, its intense quality as a work of art redeems it from such dismissal. Finally, Mr. Venturi warned against extremist positions and ideological stands amid urban and institutional development. A pure historicist or progressive modernist position may create an ostensible harmony. Yet, the purism of this dead harmony ignores contemporary demands and the valid needs of a working place. We must allow juxtapositions of forms and styles which permit positive growth within an architectural landscape and which balance the requirements of

form, symbolism and use. Great campuses and cities maintain such a balance. Penn and its architects are committed to meet this challenge and to acknowledge the wonders of our contemporary realities. Mr. Venturi concluded that, at this time, we must allow ourselves to make history as well as to acknowledge it.

Marna Whittington, University Senior Vice-President, explained the fiscal plan for the Institute. Phase I of the plan, the demolition of Smith Hall and the construction of the wet-lab facility, will cost \$39 million. Phase II, the renovation of Music and Morgan with a rear addition for dry-lab facilities, will cost \$24 million. Phases III & IV, restoring the interior of Hayden Hall and other alterations, has been estimated at \$12 million. This investment, the largest academic project yet undertaken at Penn, is critical to the University. Funding will come from three sources: an anticipated \$10 million federal grant, with another \$25 million possibly to follow; a grant of \$1 million from the Commonwealth and University funds. The University Trustees authorized a debt of \$20 million for this project; other funds will come through fund-raising. Penn presently has adequate resources for Phase I. The timing of phases II through IV will depend on the fund-raising efforts. The University cannot afford to undertake such a significant venture with anything less than its optimal plan. Development of the Institute will result in an increase in research funding by \$10-15 million, as well as three hundred jobs. Dr. Whittington concluded by suggesting a comparison of the endeavors represented, in their respective eras, by Smith Hall and the Institute.

Commission Question and Comment

Mr. Montgomery invited Commission comment. Mr. Wilds inquired into the viability of a design scheme which would preserve Smith Hall in whole. To meet programmatic needs, the new facility would require greater height or bulk than shown in the study. James Collins of Payette Associates, laboratory consultants, explained that increasing the proposed height or bulk was undesirable. As wet lab facilities are dominated by mechanical systems, particularly a fume hood exhaust, increasing the number of floors increases the inefficiencies of these systems, and decreases the net to gross spatial ratio. To address questions regarding contiguity and optimal floor alignment, Mr. Collins noted that these facilities must provide for the use, transport and disposal of radioactive, volatile and caustic materials. The Chemistry and Engineering complex has handling facilities for these substances. Building on a remote site would require their duplication at significant cost and unnecessary risk.

Mr. Nathan asked Dr. Hackney if the University may face a loss of faculty if the Institute were not developed. Alluding to an Inquirer article which described the recent departure of a Temple University scientist to another institution, Mr. Nathan suggested that exposing Penn to a similar fate was not in the public interest. President Hackney acknowledged that failing to build the Institute as proposed may erode morale with unfortunate ramifications. Noting that Penn perceives that its long-term interests are congruent with those of the City, he reinforced the

benefit of the Institute plan to both the school and the City.

Presentation by the Advocates for the Preservation of Smith Hall

Dr. Michael Lewis, professor of architectural history at Bryn Mawr College, opposed the demolition request. He explained that Smith Hall is a fine example of German inspired architecture and of the work Collins and Autenrieth, as well as a landmark in the history of American science. Its design, however, is quite different from that which we often associate with collegiate architecture. Most American collegiate architecture has been inspired by the examples of Oxford and Cambridge. At Penn, College Hall set this tone for the West Philadelphia campus. In 1891, the construction of Smith Hall did not fit this mold. However, an absence of parapets and gargoyles does not constitute valid grounds for dismissing this building as a failed attempt at Victorian architecture by two Germans in their dotage. To the contrary, Smith Hall was built in a distinctly modern style. There were no medieval laboratories of hygiene, and therefore, no established architectural styles for such facilities. To reflect the German-inspired research ideal of the activities inside, the architects employed a German style. Though under-appreciated by some architectural historians, this style clearly has roots in contemporary German architectural theory and practice. During the 1830s, German students of architecture were taught not to copy one style but to look at many and synthesize their elements. The design of Smith Hall reflects this German architectural tradition, often used for institutional design. Several features of the style evident in the building are: its flat roof, the abstracted lines of a Greek portico, its low, shallow pediment, and the repetition of mass produced terra cotta panels forming its frieze. Having noted that scheme 3a was preferable to demolition, Dr. Lewis urged the Commission to deny the permit.

Dr. Robert Kohler, professor of the History and Sociology of Science, contended that Smith Hall warranted preservation because it possessed far greater significance than the University had assumed. Having attained a PhD in Chemistry from Harvard University, Dr. Kohler has studied the history of American science for twenty years. Based on this experience, he remarked that the conclusion by the University consultant that Smith Hall possesses little relative historic importance is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the history of science. It assumes that the late nineteenth century revolution in scientific education began, and ended, with the introduction of laboratory experimentation in classrooms. This development of the 1870s, however, was only a prelude to the irreversible revolution which reached fruition in the construction of facilities dedicated to research and its training. In America, this German mode of education for the few was altered radically by the democratic ideal of mass education. Here, educators believed that research could be taught to everyone. Research transformed the focus of education from the simple transferral of old information to the generation of new knowledge. It became the basis for practical careers in academia, high-technology industries, hospitals and similar pursuits. Through the late 1880s and early 1890s, universities espoused this idea through the construction of

dedicated facilities. Though Johns Hopkins University had been perceived as the lone pioneer in this endeavor, further research illustrated that this revolution occurred in a much more competitive, pluralistic environment. The University of Pennsylvania was one of the institutions which led this educational revolution. Although some research and training occurred earlier in the Hare Building and Logan Hall, both were built for general use. Any research undertaken in them was constrained by a lack of space and inadequate facilities. The research revolution was embodied in a second phase of buildings. Today, Smith Hall is the sole survivor of that 1890 revolution at the University of Pennsylvania.

Smith Hall is the quintessential embodiment of the research revolution. Its exterior looks like a laboratory, and its floor plan was clearly designed for research. Its primary sponsors were articulate leaders in the research movement who focused their professional endeavors on building the infrastructure for this revolution. Smith Hall stands as an exemplar of their ideal of research as a service to the community. The northern wing, divided into small rooms for specialized research, was not reserved solely for academics; anyone with the ideas and zeal to conduct research could reserve them for a small fee. This convergence of academic endeavor and municipal service was among the most distinctive features of Smith Hall. The Duhring addition of 1899 did not mar its symmetry; the building had always been asymmetrical in function. Its external appearance conveyed the practical ideal of its internal function. The Director of the Laboratory of Hygiene knew that its design defied architectural convention. At its opening, he remarked:

as regards the external appearance of the building, opinions will...differ; I will only say that it has been planned from within outward, which is the reason it looks like a laboratory and not a castle or cathedral. In many respects, it forms a striking contrast to the Library (Furness Building)...and it is fit and proper that it should do so. The Library represents the...experience and wisdom of the past. The Laboratory is the workshop of the future.

The University commended the architects for this design. Collins and Autenrieth were not "out of touch," as suggested by Dr. Thomas; rather, they were clearly attuned to contemporary ideals.

Through its history as the Laboratory of Hygiene, Smith Hall produced numerous researchers with the skills to devise new technologies, to draft new environmental regulations and to develop municipal health systems. Yet, the building itself served as an instrument for experimentation in heating, ventilation and sanitation systems. A room on the first floor was fitted with radiators of four different designs to test their comparative efficiency. Pipes were left exposed and painted different colors for study. In this manner, Smith Hall is unique; there was nothing like it before, and nothing quite like it since. There is no comparison between it and other early hygiene laboratories. Elsewhere, individual rooms were used for experimentation or programs were dispersed among makeshift labs across campuses. Smith Hall is a masterpiece of laboratory

design which has remained largely intact. The original laboratory floor plans, the decorative ceilings, the various building systems and even the four different radiators survive. Though it has suffered from years of "deferred maintenance," it stands a miraculous survivor from the crucial moment of the research revolution. Despite its unique character, the University did not realize its importance.

The demolition of Smith Hall for short term advantages would be tragic. The issue is not preservation versus the development of the Institute. To the contrary, this development could unite progress and preservation. The new information has revealed that Smith is not disposable. Though alternatives exist, they were not explored seriously because the University concluded, very early, that Smith Hall was disposable. It is not Smith Hall that stands in the way of the Institute but rather faulty planning which resulted in a scheme that required the destruction of an irreplaceable historic landmark. This planning process was flawed even in its historical advice. If the Administration wanted to understand the historical significance of Smith Hall, it could have asked those dedicated to the study of the history and sociology of science. Dr. Kohler expressed his belief that the University, now aware of the significance of Smith Hall, would not proceed with plans for its demolition. For the University to proceed with the plan would subvert its own mission, of uniting past and progress, tradition and change. Though personally committed to the preservation of Smith Hall in its entirety and somewhat dissatisfied with scheme 3a, Dr. Kohler noted that this compromise was historically defensible, given the previous alterations to the southern wing. He concluded by offering a vision of Smith Hall at the core of the Institute, as a center of small seminar rooms which would promote an understanding and appreciation of the history of science.

Architect John Blatteau, a graduate and professor at the Graduate School of Fine Arts, emphasized the value of Smith Hall to the surrounding nineteenth century landscape. Given this value, its rank as "contextual" by the University consultant, especially compared to the ranking of Music and Morgan as "distinguished," makes sense only as a justification for the demolition of Smith Hall. Together these buildings create an aesthetic whole which exceeds the sum of its parts. Smith Hall is the oldest remaining building in the precinct, as well as its symbolic anchor and the namesake of the Walk. Mr. Blatteau disputed the projected costs for the Institute and presented his own fiscal analysis. He stressed that this site, perhaps more than any other on campus, links us to generations of Penn alumni. The value of this historic precinct to alumni and the citizens of Philadelphia makes the demolition of Smith Hall unjustifiable for reasons of convenience. Given the existence of viable alternatives, Mr. Blatteau urged the Commission to deny the permit.

Rebuttal from the University of Pennsylvania

Dr. Cooperman suggested that the questions now were simpler: the Commission must decide either to allow the demolition of Smith Hall or to force the University to accept a compromise which was

neither reasonable nor acceptable. The compromise not only would cost more, but also would adversely effect the surrounding historic environment. Dr. Cooperman stressed that, despite the testimony of Dr. Kohler regarding the significance of the building, the University must reach the same conclusion -- that the Smith site is the optimal location for the Institute. To address the ranking of Smith Hall as "contextual," Dr. Cooperman introduced George Thomas of the CLIO Group, Inc. Dr. Thomas indicated that Smith Hall was classified in the lowest category because it is demonstrably less important than many other buildings on campus and clearly less significant than others in the precinct. Despite claims that it was the first dedicated hygiene laboratory, one had been established earlier at the Long Island College Hospital in New York City. Further, Smith Hall was not the first site of scientific research on the Penn campus; other buildings were used for basic scientific research. The Director of the Laboratory of Hygiene did not even mention Smith Hall again, though he did stress the value of Pepper Laboratory, built in 1894. Further, by the time Collins and Autenrieth designed Smith Hall they had fallen in stature; they often were not invited to compete in architectural competitions. They received the commission for Smith Hall only because they were the house architect of Henry Charles Lea, a benefactor of the University. Although its architectural style may be unique on Penn campus, its value is limited. The most significant development in Philadelphia architecture in the late nineteenth century is the creative syntheses of Frank Furness. His work and that of other architects reaching the heights of their careers warrant preservation before this outdated design. Other buildings in the precinct received higher rankings based on their significance to University history: Bennett Hall stands as a symbol of the admission of women; Hayden Hall, built for the Dental School, was the first facility constructed for that purpose in the nation, and the Cret Chemistry Lab is the only campus building by this important architect. Dr. Thomas suggested that the value of Smith Hall could be conveyed effectively through written histories and HABS recordation. It did not warrant preservation, particularly compared to the other historic landmarks on campus.

Rebuttal from the Advocates for the Preservation of Smith Hall

Dr. Kohler stressed that the feasibility study, unlike Dr. Cooperman, did not reach an unambiguous conclusion that the Smith site is uniquely well suited for the Institute. Dr. Kohler suggested that this site had been chosen for its convenience. The planning process made no direct comparison of the intangible costs of various alternatives. Though construction on the site of the tennis courts may detract from available recreation space, this value was not weighed against the impact of the demolition of Smith Hall. Design scheme 3a has been dismissed as poor preservation, yet certainly it is preferable to wholesale demolition. Though respectful of the architectural expertise of George Thomas, Dr. Kohler stressed that Dr. Thomas was not an historian of science, and that he had made erroneous conclusions. Smith Hall was the first fully realized hygiene laboratory in the United States. The research revolution is manifest in its architecture. In contrast, the Wistar Institute had no research

rooms; two-thirds of its space was dedicated to museum exhibits. While Pepper Lab may have possessed as much importance as Smith Hall, Penn already demolished the former. Architecturally, Smith Hall possesses significance as a fine example of the work of two German-American architects employing a distinct, contemporary German style often underrated by architectural historians. Finally, Smith Hall stands as a critical part of a nineteenth century landscape on Penn campus. The Institute, as proposed, would intrude adversely on this precinct.

Public Comment

Mr. Montgomery invited public comment from representatives of any associations that wished to testify. Howard Kittell, Executive Director of the Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, stressed the importance of this decision. The Commission already established that this building warranted preservation in its act of designation in 1989. Its loss must be justified by overwhelming proof that no other prudent or responsible alternative exists. Though loathe to endorse any demolition proposal, the Coalition acknowledges the importance of allowing expansion which has been deemed absolutely essential. The Coalition asks that the Commission ensure that the University had proven beyond a doubt that the Smith Hall site is the most feasible for the new facility and that an alternate site or configuration would be so physically and programmatically unacceptable as to make demolition justifiable. If the Commission approves this application, the Coalition requests the assurance of the following conditions:

- that final approval will not be given until all funding has been secured and final design plans have been approved by all relevant city agencies; and
- that the University agree to preserve and maintain the adjacent historic structures.

Michael Hardy, Vice-President of the University City Historical Society, conveyed the unanimous opposition of that group to this request, based on the significance of Smith Hall to an historic district on the National Register. He warned that approving this permit would diminish the value of local historic designation.

Mr. Montgomery next invited comment from any individuals not representing a group. He then acknowledged James P. Colgate, a graduate student at the University. Mr. Colgate insisted that the Code prohibited the issuance of a demolition permit for an historic building unless the Commission finds that issuance of a permit is necessary in the public interest or that the building cannot be used for any purpose for which it may be reasonably adapted. He concluded that the reasons advanced by the University met neither condition.

Architect Gray Smith stressed that the proposed building would ruin an historic landscape. He called for a study of subterranean alternatives. In response to Mr. Wilds' request for an assessment of Scheme 3a, Mr. Smith stated that pursuing this design was a mistake, as all of Smith Hall should be preserved.

Hai-Lu Dai, Associate Professor of Chemistry, emphasized the importance of the Institute to allow the University to remain competitive in its efforts to attract research funds and scholars. Having noted that many graduate students and faculty were not Philadelphia natives, he indicated that many had chosen to work here based on the promise of programmatic expansion. After relating his present problems stemming from the division of teaching and research facilities, Dr. Dai stressed the importance of developing the Institute, as proposed, with contiguous facilities. He concluded that a failure to build this facility as proposed may result in a loss of scholars to other institutions. David Christiansen, Assistant Professor of Chemistry, echoed the comments of his colleague and emphasized that the ability of young faculty to expand their research programs is critical to Penn's future. Bryan Culkin reinforced these points by explaining that the present divided facilities made expensive equipment inaccessible to some scholars.

Dr. Edward Thornton, professor of Chemistry and chairman of the Chemistry Building Committee since 1982, supported the proposed development plan. He noted that a subterranean stream rendered the concept of underground construction impossible. Responding to an inquiry by Mr. Wilds, he noted that Scheme 3a met spatial needs, but lacked the amenities of the recommended scheme, including more windows and a more substantial courtyard. Professor Alan McDiarmid introduced himself as perhaps the last remaining faculty member who undertook research in Smith Hall in 1955-57. He expressed doubt that it could be adapted for contemporary research, even after extensive, costly renovations.

Elizabeth Hunt and John Parker, respectively past and present leaders of graduate student assemblies, opposed the demolition request. Miss Hunt announced that two assemblies overwhelmingly adopted resolutions urging the preservation of Smith Hall. Mr. Parker stressed that approval of this request only would encourage the University to sustain its record of failing to inform those persons effected by its decisions.

Mr. Montgomery expressed appreciation to everyone who testified as well as to all the other persons attending this hearing. He then asked Mr. Tyler if he wished to comment. Mr. Tyler, who supported this demolition request at the meeting of the Architectural Committee, reaffirmed his recommendation. Having scrutinized the testimony submitted, he explained his underlying rationale. The Commission determined the significance of Smith Hall in October 1989. Presently, that is not an issue. Today, the Commission must balance that value against the other factors set forth in the ordinance, including an assessment of Penn's claims of financial hardship and benefit to the public good. Mr. Tyler submitted that Penn had met this burden. The public interest will not be served if Penn faces the possibility of losing scholars and substantial research funds because of a lack of adequate laboratory facilities. A similar problem at Temple University reinforced the gravity of this situation.

Mr. Tyler suggested that the Commission balance the importance of preservation at Penn with its need to grow in a constrained area. The University has developed a more sympathetic view toward

historic preservation. Himself a 1958 Penn graduate, Mr. Tyler recalled when the Furness Library was dismissed as ugly and Irvine Auditorium considered a joke. Since then, two decades of unsympathetic, progressive-modernist construction followed. Recently, however, the University has demonstrated a strong commitment to its architectural heritage. Mr. Tyler added that the retention of Venturi, Scott-Brown and Associates for the new building influenced his considerations. Though not in concurrence with all of their writing, nor an admirer of all of their designs, Mr. Tyler stressed that the firm already has commanded a significant place in our time. A design by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown seems a worthy contemporary candidate amid the University's collection of work by Richards, Furness, Cope and Stewardson, Eyre, Trumbauer and Kahn. As noted by Mr. Venturi, approval of this permit allows us to make history. Once more, Mr. Tyler recommended the approval of the application, based on certain conditions.

A MOTION was introduced by Mr. Nathan and seconded by Mr. Wismer to approve the demolition request, contingent upon the following conditions:

- that the University not demolish Smith Hall until funding has been secured, plans approved by all relevant agencies, and construction ready to commence;
- that the University not demolish Smith Hall until the building has been recorded to HABS standards and deposited with the Commission; and
- that the Commission regard its approval as *res judicata* absent a change in the Ordinance.

The Commission adopted this motion by a vote of 8-1, with Mr. Wilds opposed. Commission members Aborn, Cuorato, Kaplan, Wismer, Montgomery, Washington, Nathan, Thompson supported the motion. Dr. Brownlee and Mr. Hollenberg abstained.

The Report of the Thirty-Eighth Meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation held on 17 July 1990, David Brownlee, Chairman. Dr. Brownlee brought forward a favorable recommendation from the Committee to designate the Mellor and Meigs Atelier, 205-207 S. Juniper Street. This brick building possesses significance as a fine example of the American Arts and Crafts style, as the work of the well-known Philadelphia architectural firm of Mellor and Meigs, and for its use as the office and studio of this firm. Constructed in 1912, the Atelier has been considered one of the firm's best designs. Dr. Brownlee indicated that the Committee voted unanimously to recommend the building for historic designation.

Mel Heifetz, owner of the building, requested a deferral and an explanation of his legal obligations if the building were designated. Several questions arose regarding the actual property lines on this site. A MOTION to defer this matter until February, made by Mr. Wilds and seconded by Mr. Nathan, was approved unanimously. The staff indicated that it would examine uncertainties regarding the ownership of the lot.

The Report on Staff Activities, December 1990. The Commission voted to incorporate this report into the record. Mr. Hollenberg inquired into a demolition permit application for **5324-26-28 Germantown Avenue**. In November 1990, the Commission deferred this matter until December, contingent upon the sealing and securing of the properties and the agreement by representatives of all interested parties that they would devise a rehabilitation strategy within thirty days. The Commission did not convene in December, no further negotiations occurred and the issue rested with the property owner. In response to an inquiry by Mr. Wilds regarding the **schedule for the proposed historic districts**, Mr. Tyler stated that hearings may commence in four months.

The Commission adjourned at 1:20 p.m. **The next Stated Meeting of the Commission is scheduled for 13 February 1991.**

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel W. Simcox,
Executive Secretary