

THE MINUTES OF THE 345TH STATED MEETING
OF THE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

12 September 1990

City Council Caucus Room

Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman

Present: Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chair
Christine Washington, Vice Chair
David Brownlee
David Hollenberg
Jason Nathan
Reverend William D. Thompson
Peter Aborn, Deputy Commissioner,
Department of Public Property
Barbara Kaplan, Executive Director,
City Planning Commission
David Wismer, Department of Licenses and Inspections

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

Also: Howard Kittell, Executive Director
Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
Deborah Kelly,
Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
Catherine Franklin, Penn-Knox Neighborhood Association
John C. Van Horne, Library Company of Philadelphia
Paul Curran, City Planning Commission

The Minutes of the 344th Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 8 August 1990, Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman. Mr. Nathan requested a clarification regarding the vote to adopt the Rules and Regulations. The minutes of the 334th Stated Meeting, therefore, were amended to reflect that the Rules and Regulations were adopted, as amended by Dr. Brownlee at Section 6.3.c.

The Report of the Thirty-Seventh Meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation held on 17 July 1990, David Brownlee, Chairman. Dr. Brownlee informed the Commission that the Committee reviewed nominations to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places for the following: six buildings, an historic district and a thematic resource nomination for street paving. Upon the request of the Commission, the Committee also examined three designated properties along Germantown Avenue to assess their historical significance.

Discussion: Assessment of Historical Significance

5324-26-28 Germantown Avenue: Upon the Commission's request of 8 August 1990, the Committee examined these properties to assess their historical significance. Each had been designated before individual nominations were prepared for properties entered on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The Committee undertook this review in conjunction with a pending demolition permit application filed by Michael Young.

Dr. Brownlee reported that the Committee reviewed information provided by the staff and the Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia. He suggested that a detailed discussion of these properties await the review of the demolition permit application and the response of the consultant retained by the Commission to evaluate the economic data submitted by Mr. Young.

Deferred Until October

The Philadelphia Inquirer Complex, Elverson and Rotogravure Buildings, 400-440 N. Broad Street. Having received a written request for a deferral from the owners, Mr. Tyler granted a postponement of this nomination until the 346th Stated Meeting on 10 October 1990.

Recommendations on Six Nominations

Mercantile Library, 1021 Chestnut Street. This building possesses significance as a fine and rare example of the International Style in Philadelphia, as an important work of architect Sydney E. Martin and as the home of the Mercantile Library. Constructed at a time when the concept of a "glass and steel box" was exciting, this building stands as a fine example of Philadelphia architecture in the first decade following World War II. In 1954, the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects awarded this building its Gold Medal. The building remains a fine, intact example of the International style.

The building gains further significance from the history of its occupant, the Mercantile Library. Formed in 1821 as a membership organization, it joined the system of the Free Library of Philadelphia in 1944. Within a decade, this building housed the collection of the Mercantile Library.

The Committee unanimously recommended the designation of this building. Mr. Nathan seconded the recommendation. The Commission voted unanimously to place the Mercantile Library, 1021 Chestnut Street, on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

Isaac S. Miller Store, 1606 Chestnut Street. The Miller Store possesses significance as a fine example of the Victorian eclectic style and as the work of late 19th century architect, Albert W. Dilks. Constructed in 1890, this store stands as an excellent and well preserved example of a small, late nineteenth century, commercial building in Center City. The Isaac Miller Store gains further significance as a design by Albert Dilks, an important Philadelphia architect of several distinctive eclectic commercial buildings.

In this design, Dilks employs several popular nineteenth-century styles: the casual asymmetry and finely textured carvings from the Queen Anne style; the round arches and thick-set masonry from the Romanesque Revival; and the large windows from the Chicago, or commercial, style.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend the designation of this building. Mrs. Washington seconded this recommendation. The Commission voted unanimously to place the Isaac S. Miller Store, 1606 Chestnut Street, on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

Pattison Estate/Furness Buildings

Dr. Brownlee noted that the next four buildings were developed on land which was once part of the estate of Robert Pattison. In 1880, Pattison donated the land to the Historical Society which, in turn, sold the gardens of the house for development. The four buildings constructed have been attributed to the architectural firm of Furness & Evans. The Committee recommended three of them favorably for designation and forwarded an unfavorable recommendation for a fourth.

James Gardiner Cassatt House, 1320 Locust Street. This residence possesses significance as a fine and rare example of the work of one of Philadelphia's most creative 19th century firms, as an outstanding example of that firm's interpretation of the Queen Anne Style and as part of the history of residential development in Center City. Built in 1883, the J.G. Cassatt House has been attributed to Furness & Evans not only for its forceful interpretation of the Queen Anne style, but also because of the longstanding relation between the firm and the Pennsylvania Railroad. Furness & Evans designed numerous buildings for this corporation, and therefore it would have been a natural extension of this relationship for the firm to have designed the residence of Railroad president's younger brother. The

house enlivens the Queen Anne style through the use of signature Furness & Evans elements like the use of polychromatic materials and the over-scaled stonework.

The Committee unanimously recommended the designation of this building. The Reverend Mr. Thompson seconded the recommendation. The Commission voted unanimously to place the James Gardiner Cassatt House, 1320 Locust Street, on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

Furness Wister House, 1322 Locust Street. Built in 1883, this residence possesses significance as a rare example of the work of Frank Furness, as an example of Victorian Eclectic style and as part of the history of a unique residential development in Center City. The building has been attributed to Furness not only for its style but also because it was built for his sister Annis Furness, a famous translator, and her husband Casper Wister. With 1320 Locust Street, the building stands as a late 19th century enclave of architect-designed mansions in Center City.

In the 1920s, the stoop and second floor bay of this residence were removed. The Committee acknowledged the significance of the building, but recommended against designation because of the severe loss of integrity.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Nathan to reject this nomination to enter the Furness Wister House, 1322 Locust Street, on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Mr. Hollenberg seconded this motion, which the Commission adopted unanimously.

Beale and Lewis Houses, 240-242 South 13th Street. These houses possess significance as fine and rare extant examples of one of Philadelphia's most creative and prolific 19th century firms, as outstanding examples of their Victorian eclectic style and as part of the history of a unique residential enclave in Center City. Constructed in 1883, these residences have been attributed to Furness & Evans not only for their forceful interpretation of the Queen Anne style but also because of the close familial and professional relations between and the clients, John Lewis and Edward Beale. Arranged in a more traditional Queen Anne arrangement, this residence was enlivened by the use of robust elements often attributed to the firm, including jerkin-headed dormers, bulbous chimneys, and a three-dimensional brick cornice.

The Committee unanimously recommended the designation of this building. Mr. Nathan seconded this recommendation. The Commission voted unanimously to place the Beale and Lewis Houses, 240-242 South 13th Street, on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

Peter Thomson Store, 1118 Walnut Street. Constructed in 1901, this store possesses significance as a fine and rare example of the Beaux-Arts French Baroque style in Philadelphia, as the work of architect Edward Hazelhurst and for its place in the history of retail commerce on Walnut Street in Center City. The work of Edward Hazelhurst, a renowned Philadelphia architect who designed many high-style buildings with his partner Samuel Huckel, includes the Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church. This building, constructed for a merchant tailor, stands as a well preserved remnant of the concentration of the custom clothing industry along the 1100 block of Walnut Street.

The Committee unanimously recommended the designation of this building. Mrs. Washington seconded this recommendation. The Commission voted unanimously to place the Peter Thomson Store, 1118 Walnut Street, on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

October Nominations

Dr. Brownlee indicated that he had no further nominations for consideration at this time. He reported, however, on two other matters before the Committee on Historic Designation.

Park Avenue Historic District, 1800-1946 Park Mall. Dr. Brownlee noted that he will present a nomination for a Park Mall Historic District at the October meeting of the Commission. This district centers on two blocks of Park Avenue in the middle of the Temple University campus. This nomination was not presented at this meeting because Section 14-2007 of the Philadelphia Code requires a minimum of sixty days between notification of the owners within an historic district and the actual designation hearing.

Street Paving Thematic Nomination. Dr. Brownlee indicated that the Committee reviewed a statement of significance for a thematic resource nomination of historic street paving. A formal nomination, however, awaits the preparation of a complete inventory. Dr. Brownlee noted that the nomination had been encouraged by community groups interested in preserving the character of certain historic streets. Accordingly, the initial inventory includes only streets in Northwest Philadelphia and Center City. This inventory can be expanded if other groups express interest, prepare adequate descriptive inventories and nominate them for designation.

Mr. Wismer expressed concern that this nomination may result

in considerable delays, expenses and other problems in relation to excavations for utility or street repairs. He also suggested that these resources could be preserved more effectively in a museum, where they could be displayed more clearly in cross-section.

Mr. Tyler acknowledged these concerns and reported that he had discussed the nomination with Joseph Syrnick, Chief Engineer and Surveyor of the Streets Department. They agreed that the nomination should be limited to streets where resources remained well preserved and where their preservation would not interfere with maintenance of transit routes or pose safety problems arising from geographical features.

Dr. Brownlee reinforced that the Committee proceeded cautiously with this nomination. He informed the Commission, however, that its preparation had been encouraged by expressed community interest. He added that most of the streets under consideration were narrow cartways which had been preserved, apparently without any disturbance for utility installations or other repairs. In response to a question from Mr. Hollenberg, he indicated that street paving assessed as historically significant had been incorporated into the inventories of the proposed local historic districts.

Concluding his report, Dr. Brownlee commended Commission consultant Ira Kauderer for his fine work, not only on this nomination, but also throughout the past year.

The Report on Staff Activities, July 1990. Mr. Montgomery indicated that the staff report was acceptable for incorporation into the record. Several Commission members noted that this meeting marked the first time that there had not been a report of the Architectural Committee.

Mr. Tyler noted that the Commission staff had been informed that the Department of Public Property scheduled a move of the office of the Historical Commission to the United Gas Improvement Building (UGI). Although the move may disrupt operation for a while, it can only improve staff morale and the image of the Commission.

Resolution Honoring John Dickey, F.A.I.A.

Mr. Tyler requested the introduction of a resolution honoring John M. Dickey, FAIA, for his service to the Philadelphia Historical Commission and to the field of historic preservation.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Hollenberg and seconded by Mr. Nathan to adopt the resolution. A complete copy of the same has been attached and shall remain as part of the minutes of this meeting.

Old Business

Architectural Committee deferral, 1727-1733 Diamond Street
Mr. Tyler indicated that the Department of Licenses and

Inspections assessed the facades of these buildings as "dangerous." Though conceivable to preserve the existing brick facades, Mr. Tyler questioned the value of this approach. He concurred, therefore, with the original proposal of the Philadelphia Housing Authority to remove the existing facades and to rebuild them in a manner which would closely reproduce their original appearance.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Hollenberg, and seconded by Dr. Brownlee, to approve this application to demolish the existing facades and to rebuild so as to reproduce their original appearance. The Commission adopted this motion unanimously.

Executive Session

Near 11:00 a.m., Mr. Montgomery announced that the Commission would convene an Executive Session to discuss pending legal matters related to the U.S. Naval Home. At approximately 11:30 a.m., the Commission adjourned the Executive Session.

There being no further business, the Commission adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel W. Simcox,
Executive Secretary